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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Barbed Lines

BY

Reginald Hart ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1994

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of Canada

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April 25, 1994

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Barbed Lines submitted by Reginald Hart in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

D. F. Barbour

B. L. Almon

J. E. Foster

April 22, 1994

Abstract

This work consists of a series of poems in diverse forms utilizing concise description with a tendency to avoid closure. Primarily, rural subjects are explored but urban contrast is occasionally provided.

The landscape is usually treated as a text with no historical paradigms, freeing it from the imposition of any prior meaning. Generation and regeneration are central thematic concerns. However, the order which humanity attempts to impose on nature is a recurring sub-theme in the poetic sequence. The recording of the event, the occasion, and the encounter are expressed within the various quick takes and reverberative echoes.

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PLASTIC MEMORIES

"Tell me where all past years are."
John Donne

PLASTIC MEMORIES

snowing tonight
and she's looking through
the plastic remembering
the hairdryer
awkward in his hand
as he shrunk
plastic over the window
muttering about dinner
pretending she wasn't there

growing to love
this prairie land
where supper's dinner
dinner's lunch
brunch and coffee
rival tea
time for breakfast?
none tonight
have to work --
   write the real

watching over my shoulder
the ghosts   not content
with barbed lines or crow gossip
seizing the pain
the sting of breaking words
her conviction
and mine
the storm windows in place
and snow failing
as it contests for the light

they would be content
to live the pain
to feel the sting of chilblain caught
skating on the slough
shoveling the drive
chasing scoops of snow at stray dogs

FREDA

never write
of hutterite
women less than men
turn to look
with empty eyes
penned cattle
indifferent

they steal he said
they're bad she said
they're crows we said
caw caw
caw caw
caught

she said
she felt it
more than we

her carnal contact
with outsiders
a covert fondness
for the perfume we gave her
voraciously reading
views unchecked

a checked scarf
bobbing on
a black dress
full of cancer
ruminating like
hope/chest
full of promise
unique
as freda

CROW GOSSIP

i freed a crow once
penned in a wooden box
i give my word
i don't know what
something made me
stop and look over the edge
afraid of the unknown
of course suspecting that it was
domesticated crow

some town kids scattered crumbs
placed a frozen moon pie box
tied a kite string to a branch
propped it underneath an edge

the flaps were waving welcomes
and the wind their only guest
playing out the string they
shushed and hissed
and lay down in the grass

and waiting is forever when
you're only ten years old
when they tired of the box trick
they'd get rod to whitebait gulls

summer after summer went
and came and went and
came and went while they never
caught a crow with home-made buns
or lucky spoon

sparrows magpies
gulls galore
so many miles
from sea and shore
and then
they grew away from ground

they left the crow
the birds aghast
all attempts to loving keep
or insane leers and pointed sticks
to a younger science passed

So when the pie was opened you sang?
A: fc /n /rime
check the time?
A: mode fast
A: /n echo off
echo off? [Yes] [No]
A: rem looping

i remember this crow
dignity stripped squawk muffled
dull black dress and empty eyes
penned for love or cruel art

i hear crows are squawking loners
even in a rookery
lost in the midst of the muddle
penned
or displayed in moon pie crates
quiet
still

but my expertise at matters
that concern the wary crow
comes from hearsay
and childhood/
cruelty white with age
hey i don't even own a boat

A: BREAK

through the open flap a
folded useless door
the baking sun
swallowed by the eyes like they were glass
glinting off
the motionless black

there are times when
i think about crows
those times when crows
flap around my door

i hear crows talk
about friendly townspeople
 -- they tell one other

they ditched the box
  outside of town
the crow was gone

HISCAR

hiscar
had prairie
at the edge
proud and showing
old beloved

a wild red
breaking
running rose
all bubbled up
and filmy white

memory scratches
healthy surface
once red painful
brush against

a grizzled red
some falling off
the lines you feel
like highway tar

BLINK AND MISS IT

driving west
starting to turn
green trash bag in ditch
round soggy bail
hugging the prairie
and notice no end-
gate in the truck
dried white clay
the gophers are out
there's one on that mound
starting to turn
lime-green greens
the golfers are out
there's one on that mound
driving west

POST-BIRTHDAY BLUES

a seagull blanket
cleaning yesterdays
that's me over the portable city
the one above

a/lone hawk circling
above the crowd
above the mud

ten dollar straw bales
the mud fights the rain

where mudballs hang
canadian flags

draped out of the mud
soaring fifty feet high
sewing landscape and sky
the red narrow edge

to cover the pasture
they bedded some wood

the snow fence that could
some broke up pallets

squatters invading
to blanket their claim

communal domain
itinerant city

the second gate searches
where some were barred

everything hard
security confiscates

cattle prods lacking
this sets them apart
security's art
the wound-up to round-up

herded through gates
like domesticate beasts

securities breached
some testes were fondled

timothy trampled
by leather clad foot
its origin moot
like genuine cowhide

some portable toilets
that lineups had found

but finding the ground
the brazen ignored them

feasting on cowpies
before we appeared
some chased them with beer
the flies had to scatter

a beer cup of plastic
soars over the crowd
no bottles allowed
the prairie protected

chocolate stick ice cream
a stand in the muck
the manicured mud
sticking to rev 'lers

chicago clad salesman
with two dollar cups
waves ice-cola syrup
dressed up like a bull

a portable turret
looks over the ground
for mixing the sound
a tower erected

the headliners helped
by a heavy light crew
the biggest named lou
i noticed his nametag

they each had a spotlight

to augment the rays
all trained on the stage

mechanically driven

upstaging def leppard
was ugly kid joe
postponing the show
they started a mudfight

openers rockhead
to warm april wine

a king for a time
the best was tom cochrane

pieces of plastic
and burlap grain sacks
a nylon back-pack
a/lone hawk kept circling

with claws retracted
not tempted to dive

from smoking the hive
the living prey buzzing

wrapped up in a blanket
affixed to the stage
it's canada day
it's raining it's pouring

THE BRIDGE

there is a bridge
on iron creek
they call the bridge the bridge
just the bridge
it's been a site of many crossings
a site of sights the bridge

his mother had to
sew and wash
and iron at the neon wheel
just the wheel
his daddy drank and played at bridge
with creaky hand
and iron appeal

now the only thing a young man knows
is what he has for thoughts
just the bridge
he drove out to the iron bridge
so drunk he couldn't stop

come with me now to wavy lake
and circle marbled ground
just the wheel
a frosty name another bridge
an epitaph unwound

A MOUNTED IMAGE

the mystique of mounties includes opera
dudley do right's impression
of nelson eddy
calling you
america's sweetie
jeanette macdonald
upstaged in edmonton
by rocky
underdogs
at bullwinkle's restaurant

CIVIL EARS

abandoned house
boasting NO
refuge from
the marking season

venture through
a useless door
spine hairs up
pointed invasion

a haphazard bed
with filthy linen

old news
war/time
paperback
spine up
marking
reader's spot

urine stinging
heavy cloud
makeshift toilet
rise to meld
ancestral odours
once full beer
bottle shattered
civil ears

THE REGULARS

"Take it and eat; it will
be bitter to your stomach,
but sweet as honey in your mouth."
Revelation, 10:9

"The smoker you drink
the player you get."
Joe Walsh

"I had thought to have let
in some of all professions
that go the primrose way to
th' everlasting bonfire."
Macbeth: Act 2, Scene 3: 18-19

PROLOGUE

when lambing march
meets april's fool
and drowsy roots
are cruelly primed
when the lazy rain
drips pussy willows
shaking leaves
from winter sleep
then papa geof
would go on tour

he took me out
carousing beers
said "listen johnny
      you got ears"

regulars spend money
regulars pay the bills
set your watch --
watch your pocketbooks
                DRINKING CAN KILL
         "watch your tongue"
                        "mind your manners"
   "he holes upstairs"
              "maintains the tavern"
tasting wares

THIS WEEK: WORMWOOD

open doors
packed as hell
scented wood
friday smell

fender speakers
move the air
 over the ten
two stepping pairs

a song -- highschool
  cigarette
bar-stool   footrail
    "yup you bet"

then filmy white
the glasses chink
they tap the time
fresh out of sink

the regulars
the marionettes
drinkers   dancers   cigarettes

2. TWIN TRUMPETS

they plant their feet
on musty floors
where white clay sticks
rub foul sores

the cast iron table leg
lofty thought
a gentlemen's argument
leading nowhere

one bumps his dregs
on the musty carpet
one mixes red-eye
the blood of a dead man

zak repeats
what others say
grinning zeke
nods and nods and/
waves for service

two and a juice
the bartender reads it

REMEMBER THE PORTER

eighty years
liquor years
engineer
labourer

clothes of pride
pocket stitch
matching cap
lift and itch

haggard face
rails maintained
lukewarm draught
lift and drain

"seven o'clock
set your watch"

slow
deliberate
throat vibration
weighing words
balancing nations

thin lips
barely move
itchy hair
lift and soothe

countless patrons
stimulate
his memories
coagulate
the railroad stock
"he 'll liquidate!"
"it's bullshit"
"please elaborate"

"well" (zombie)
"rails" (highball)
"the west" (scotch)
"empty pockets" (wine)

"What year was she?" said Geoffrey. After this I looked at an open door, seven mounted heads, and ten powder horns. A hodgepodge hungry with western themes: bucksaws, flintlocks, double t's. Pioneer tools and disco days. Mirrors of beer. A neon haze.

some cowboy posters
two-piece girls
a horseshoe nailed
to the bathroom door

"the crowded train" (the seven heads)
"the rails maintained" (in wired bliss)

no power poles to measure snow
no crow or blackfoot
buffalo...

4. AN EMPTY CHAIR

trapper likes the pickled eggs
he salts them well
to stimulate
his appetite
for rum and coke
neat and pressed
a dirty joke

his famous tricks
a bowl poured out
a burning ash
a match burns twice

he calms the scorched
with a "goddam joke"
"guaranfuckinteed"

the barman evicting
an old woman babbling
restfully babbling
to saints and martyrs
in an empty chair
his untamed tongue
is a sharp two-edged sword
her scarlet hat
bobs a dark smear
above her penciled brow

gold foil earrings
and loops of plastic
pearls and dark glass
jewels reflecting
a purple dress
an empty bottle
molson gold
in her marbled hand

"don't worry about babe" papa says to the man
"women are cities
the passion of man"

"she'll get more from trapper than she ever gave
mix her a double
whatever she craves"

TISSUE PRESERVED -- THE PURE MIND

his head
and hair
were white as white wool
five two breezy blue
his nose round
a misshaped hardball
a thousand eyes front and back
penetrating craters
with a wild red glow

no photo available
in his highschool yearbook
--a regular favourite
draught beer

the locals' treatment
questionable
"hello"
(no one sits with bill)
the lonely crib-board
a permanent fixture
on his table

on the wall above
(the barman condones it)
a yellowed cellophane sign
BILLS PLACE (sic)
beside posters of girls
bathing suits
drinking beer

PAPA C.

a pilsner beer
as cold as snow
licking the edge
of hand-rolled smokes
emerging from
a pouch of gold

he spoke familiar
hockey weather
hard times
a depression family
a large family
on relief
the father in jail
avoiding argument
voraciously reading
always in agreement

"yup yur right
on that one boy
yup yup yup
i believe ya"

if drunk enough
he'd bark some service
a wired rambling
from there to mcGee
his arm outstretched
like a bronze orator
a round of applause
and three free "pils"
a rousing toast to sinclair ross
one story building
then another
the crowd seeking
a way away

in his last months
he quit carousing
and started spooning
bowls full of the wrath of god
wild stubble
and a white face
cloth burned white hot
wrapped around his cold frame
his hour of trial
had come like a thief
no service
no poetry

EPILOGUE

weak worms
open doors

trumpet sounds
open doors

knock knock knock!
opens doors

an empty chair
is an open door

the pure mind
opens doors

a papa c.
opens doors

COLD SEED

"The seed of truth lies hidden deep within."
Boethius

FRESH SNOW

miss dark land
winter white
and picot blue
of just
white ice

just ice and white
white and stone

chthonic demons
insane leers
stone temple pilates
mist the poetry
in a lispering land

BOOKS ON GARDENING

our past is soil
under the fingernails
too close
too personal
to be scrutinized

when the earth invades a crevice
it's de-filed
A:s - dirt dirty shitty
yet
entire libraries
venerate compost

SOILED

black rot
organicallyrich
soil from deaths
we don't recognize
the found feast
the dust eaten
and eaten and eaten
until the soil
spits the dust to life
that moves the soil
and eats dust from the soil
eating the black rot
organicallyrich
soil from deaths

PICKING ROCKS

stone pile periods
rolled away
from seed starved soil
risen up
from winterheaves
empty tomb
unearthing
like teeth emerging
from swollen gums

QUITTING THE CAMPUS

workers busy
loading truck
cigarettes
etc truck

ground leaves
speckled reddish-brown
invaders cautious
unknown ground

sound on
headphones
bounce along
carry a parka

overhearing
foreign students

gold spades
whispering off
a poplar

painted door
open held
a prominent white
one story building
an armload
of deliveries
crown wrapped
in vinegar and
brown paper

breeze on
lawn sprinkles
metronomic pattern
(everyone glancing at it)
scattering mist
darkening soil
and cold seed

ants conquer
bread crumbs marching out of
lunch bag over old newspaper
beside empty trashy barrel
and shattered brown bottle

spongy grass
a concrete hairpiece
adjunct to a cobblestone
carpet of geometric siblings

slowly walking
two men in suits
a casual pace
facilitates words

our jackets alike
except for name bars
none exceeding
letters five

a warm face tory
building emerging
through mountain
ash orange berries
boldly displayed
mind full of birds
shy hiding birds
conversing in melodies
fed by
plump sentinels

saying hi
nodding too
a/lone runners
team jackets
pseudonymous fate

a cloud resembling
drifting harmlessly
through breezy blue

calling a huddle
of students
haphazardly drilling
through double door
fumbling the past
through future zone

  a football
playfully tossed
between two
young men

busy hands
t-shirts
sweat pants
fans cheer

standing by
open books
standing by
hands red
faces live

a loper
jogging earnestly
toward my
destination

  shouting nick nick
at a measured pace
shrugging shoulders and
stuttered stop like
the sound had moved
in motion slow

hands mesmerized
a couple held
a perfect spot
in the face of other

a man dozing
dry lawn
out of sprinklers reach
his head rest
a canvas pack
a blue jays cap
pulled down

a beautiful tableau
an arm of bronze outstretched
do you remember quitting?
and the smell of cigarettes

ELEVATOR ETIQUETTE

randy watches
the numbers
monotonous calculations
continually determining
his proximity
hearing the squeak and groan
of the cabled car
going down
admiring his leather shoes
his blinders up
he peeks through
and notices her
admiring the floor
he catches her
peeking back
b bbblushing

we're all wary
cautious
trapped in a moving room
where were you when the lights went out?

lately i've become a menace
ignoring elevator rules

a stark second
before my floor

when the bell tolls
for my numbered floor

i insist on conversation
breaking spells
of shoes and floors

"this car was built by maxwell house"
i dryly add
while stepping off then
pause and turn
on closing door
grinning "good to the last drop"

ON A SECTION IN ALBERTA

the evanescent vision landscapes living crowd
stubble on a white face cloth

A portable sign beside a greenhouse had its letters blown by the wind. Driving by, I misread "closed for the season" as...

COLD SEED FOR THE SEASON

```
                        a
                      sea
      see
      see       the sea
cold       for the sea                5
 old                sea
 o    see
 old seed
 old seed for the seas
cold                season            10
cold       for the seas
cold       for the season
cold seed for the season
 old                 as
      seed for the    son              15
 old
cold seed for the    son
      see      the    son
cold
                 the    son            20
                     season
cold
      seed for the sea
           for the se
cold                seas               25
                       on
                 the
                       son
                        on
                 the                   30
   d  e d
                     s   on
```

time

time to

time to ponder

time to ponder things

time to ponder things that

time to ponder things that don't

time to ponder things that don't have

time to ponder things that don't have to

time to ponder things that don't have to rely

time to ponder things that don't have to rely on

GADGETRY

ANOTHER GENERATION

"For I am bound with fleshly bands,
Joy, beauty, lie beyond my scope;
I strain my heart, I stretch my hands,
And catch at hope."

Christina Rossetti

ORIGINS

brian thought
the narrator
might envision
friendly townspeople as
poles connecting
lines that communicate
from generation to
community members
distant as
clarke's belt
visible in heaven

a dam
stretched over
the ditches wound
in ground beside
barbed wire
inhibiting stumbling
onto roads for gravelly
old homesteaders
or sons of mothers
children to someday pave

distance in derived horse
power driving shafts
direct from distant steel
mills surrounding
cities of immigrants
fed white
meat from water
stretched from horizon to horizon

meat rivaling your north saskatchewan slough shark
trophy sized bass or
salmon coloured cousins
mythical pioneers
instinctively avoiding
old brians
pike infested frontier

THRESHING

if he could write
his self he would
fashion his paper brain
knowing that
they thrive
alive multiplied
like loaves
of wheat
bleached white

refined in part
by defining the whole
sparing no
expansive landscape
redefined from horizon to horizon

PROPAGATION

while dad was an awkward youth
insulating foreign doors
against frozen hordes
advancing like pikesmen
clattering armour
over a paved yard
    exercising his right
to painlessly live
his glorious manhood
to manifest
in me

and repeat

a seed
sown in alberta
repeat

a name
cloned and kept
sprouted in saskatchewan

oblivious to mitchell
fashioning paper
brians on the prairie
housed in
short green trousers
divining honing wind
and a dead gopher
bleached white

oblivious to relief feeding mother's
fatherless family in alberta

oblivious to his father
swallowing moose jaw soil
perverting history
moving east
for a green homestead
near ontario's mitchell

feeling the wind
that blew
defenseless black
gophers forced
to dig in
dried white clay
sticking to everything
left over
after the first/great
lesson of the century
that spawned us

REUNION

my son talks
to him
on line
too soon buried
with rotted poles and empty cross shadows
that disappear under
trenched landscape

glossy blacks whites reds
neutrals all
green/ground
lines surrounded
with plastic efforts
at preservation

obsolesced by
stark fibre/
optic awareness
somewhat super/
seeded by seldom seen voices
sibilating the heavens

microwaveable sense/
ability to come/
union

PRAIRIE LINES

"We give form to this land by running
a series of posts and three strands
of barbed wire around a quarter-section."
Robert Kroetsch

"Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out."
Robert Frost

FENCING

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall."
Robert Frost

there is no fence
to stop nature
there is snow fence
to humour nature

to humour nature
there is snow fence
to stop nature
there is no fence

WORK IN PROGRESS

```
-----*----
a landscape traced
with dotted line
an interlined scribbler
priming beginners
-*-----*--
the bar line posts                                  5
separate rhythm
scrambling words
breaking  measure
--*-----*--   ---*--
horizontal lines
support clinging vines                             10
and vertical twigs --
budding infants
springing green
from  no
till ground                                        15
--*-----*----*-----*--
a trinity of post and lintel
nailed with bale wire
the branches support the
matchless rambling
-- volunteer oats                                  20
and wild lentils
                  *   --*-----*--  --*-----*--
seeking meaning
outside  the line
wired natures
rambling heiroglyph                                25
*   *   *   *   *   *
a crayon dressed
in summer green
or autumn red
obscuring the line
with collage of colour                             30
-- natures rhyme

       7
the obscure branches
changing lines --
a living page
fenced in meaning                                  35
-- leaves dropping
an altered page
growing
growing
```

BARBED LINES

"God knows, too many fences fence us out."
Phyllis Webb

lines that tear trousers
barbed lines
support the sting of breaking rose
at a haven for wild oats
and volunteer rape

a back road heaven
separating wheat and tears
wild seed and chaff

KILOS OF BURGERS

kilos of triple strand barb
strung three high
are food containers
keeping day
grazing domesticates
protected from self mutilation
and auto traffic
sparse enough to condition
the hamburger in (colourized) infancy

SNOWBIRD MOTHER

when she was young
she used to laugh
listening to leaves fall
she laughed
   she didn't leave

she never laughed last labour day
she left
   for florida

IMPRESSIONS

viewed through
three layers of glass
dusty gravel
enhances the impression
a natural joshua
taking on remembering

flanking the barb
a snow fence built
to parallel
the zigzag hills

rough hewn spruce
one by eight
whitewash lacking

vertical soldiers
touching shoulders
modeled after
the pioneer and
alberta pool

engineered in railroad towns
inherited from garrisons
on a dear frontier
fashioned from untold years
of flat cars

fresh cut spruce
coming crisp
from the coast
with mountain air
some assembly required

pole shed remnants?
dugout protection?

closing in on the soldiers
imagining the knotty surface
of rough spruce
wooden divisions
transform
to floppy eared stillness
a herd of muleys
in file formation
a parade floating
in stasis

THE RED FOX AT POLAR PARK

pace and pace
pause and turn

sometimes bred
fed white meat
dead to   eat

dead   to eat
fed white meat
bred sometimes

pause and turn
pace and pace

CHAFF

swaths line
a living page
grainy and knowing

when threshing
grains of poetry
some useful
chaff remains

NOTES

page

2. Plastic Memories

watching over my shoulder
the ghosts not content (l.20-1)
Cf. Wallace Stevens, "Large Red Man Reading:" "There were ghosts that returned to earth to hear his phrases" (320).

3. Freda

women less than men (l. 3)
The Hutterian Brethren consider the male to be the head of the household. Cf. Ephesians, 5:22-4.

hope/chest (l. 28)
Freda is unattached.

4. Crow Gossip

A: fc /n /rime (l. 40)
Here a dialogue occurs between the poet and his computer. He directs the computer to check the files for rhyming words. But because the poet has used the archaic spelling -- "rime" the computer offers its closest possibility to the word, i. e. "time."

A: rem looping (l. 45)
-- rem: "remarks." Also, R.E.M. (rapid eye movement) is associated with the dream state.

8. Post-Birthday Blues

The outdoor rock concert described here occurred July 1,1993 near Camrose, Alberta.

9.

dressed up like a bull (l. 59)
-- the Chicago Bulls.

page

10.

upstaging def leppard (l. 72)
Def Leppard headlined the concert. The other acts were Rockhead, Ugly Kid Joe, Tom Cochrane and April Wine.

13. Civil Ears

heavy cloud (l. 18)
Adapted from Wallace Stevens: "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery." "The cloud rose upward like a heavy stone" (103).

14. THE REGULARS

Every tavern I ever visited had one or more interesting characters. Some elusive, many friendly, these characters always fascinated me. Those appearing in this poem are composites based on real people; some still living. Papa Geoff combines Chaucer with the first angel in Revelation and authentic tavern patrons. Many of the events, such as Papa's recitation of "The Cremation of Sam McGee" are based on actual occurrences. The dreamer shifts in and out of an imaginary tour of the pubs that Chaucer's troupe visited on their way to Canterbury, the heavenly scene depicted in Revelation, and Alberta taverns. He encounters a character who reminds him of the Porter in Macbeth, a biblical harlot, zeke and zak, trapper, and a host of patrons all demanding a voice.

15. Prologue

-- modeled after the prologue to <u>The Canterbury Tales</u>.

are cruelly primed (l. 4)
Cf. T. S. Eliot's <u>The Waste Land</u>: "April is the cruelest month" (63).

page

15.

**said "listen johnny
you got ears"** (ll. 13-4)
Cf. "I John am he who heard and saw these things."
(Revelation 22:8).

DRINKING CAN KILL (l. 19)
Alberta Liquor Control Board sign on the wall.

tasting wares (l. 24)
Cf. Simple Simon.

16. This Week: Wormwood

Cf. title:
The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.
(Revelation 8:11)

scented wood (l. 27)
Cf. Revelation 18:11.

17. 2. Twin Trumpets

rub foul sores (l. 48)
So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.
(Revelation 16:2)

the blood of a dead man (l. 56)
The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea.
(Revelation 16:3)

18. Remember The Porter

-- title: "I pray you, remember the porter."
(Macbeth Act 2 Scene 3: 21)

page

18.

After this I looked at an open door... (l. 99-100)

"After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door..." (Revelation 4:1).

20. 4. An Empty Chair

a bowl poured out (l. 124)

"The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire" (Revelation 16:8).

an old woman babbling (l. 131)

Cf. the harlot in Revelation:

> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: 'Babylon the great, mother of harlot's and earth's abominations.' And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.
> (17:4-6)

"don't worry about babe..." (148)

Cf. Revelation 17:4-6 (see above note).

mix her a double (l. 152)

> Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed. (Revelation 18:6)

21. Tissue Preserved -- The Pure Mind

-- the title is a line taken from Ezra Pound's "'Sienna Mi Fe'; Disfecemi Maremma'" in Hugh Selwyn Mauberley. The poem features the character M. Verog discussing poets who frequented the pubs in London.

page

21.

his head
and hair
were white as white wool (ll. 154-6)
"His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire..." (Revelation 1:14).

22. Papa C.

on relief (l. 192)
During the depression many Alberta families were on welfare -- on relief.

from there to mcGee (l. 204)
Cf. Robert W. Service: "The Cremation of Sam McGee."

his arm outstretched
like a bronze orator (ll. 205-6)
(Cf. "Quitting The Campus" n, ll. 109-10).

one story building (l. 210)
(Cf. "Quitting The Campus," n, l. 18)

bowls full of the wrath of god (l. 217)
Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, 'Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.' (Revelation 16:1)

had come like a thief (l. 223)
"...I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (Revelation 3:3).
-- cf. Luke 12:39, II Peter 3:10.

23. Epilogue

trumpet sounds (l. 228)
Cf. ...And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.'
(Revelation 4:1)

page

23.

knock knock knock! (l. 230)
Spoken by the Porter in Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 3: (12-13).

25. Fresh Snow

insane leers (l. 9)
-- King Lear.

stone temple pilates (l. 10)
In the mystery plays, Pilate's words are bold and often exaggerated. The stones that peek through the snow are like Pilate's voice. Homonym: Stone Temple Pilots is a contemporary rock band.

26. Books on Gardening

a:s - dirt dirty shitty (l. 8)
-- a data search for the etymology of dirt.

28. Picking Rocks

stone pile periods (l. 1)
-- Punctuation has become redundant; historians tend to compartmentalize the past into "periods."

29. Quitting The Campus

painted door (l. 18)
Cf. Sinclair Ross: "The Painted Door."

crown wrapped (l. 24)
Crown-Zellerback is a paper manufacturer.

30.

a warm face tory (l. 51)
-- the Tory Building on the University of Alberta campus.

page

30.

plump sentinels (l. 60)
-- the berries, but also the warm faced tory.

31.

fumbling the past
through future zone (ll. 73-4)
Adapted from Wallace Stevens, "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery." "If ever the search for a tranquil belief should end, / The future might stop emerging out of the past" (103).

32.

a beautiful tableau
an arm of bronze outstretched (ll. 109-10)
-- Cf. Wallace Stevens, "The Dance of the Macabre Mice:" "What a beautiful tableau tinted and towering / The arm of bronze outstretched against all evil" (117).

33. Elevator Etiquette

where were you when the lights went out? (l. 20)
-- title of a Metro Goldwyn Mayer movie; based on the 1965 blackout in New York: starring Doris Day.

34. On A Section in Alberta

-- Cf. Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro."

35. Cold Seed For The Season

for the se (l. 24)
-- for these.

page

38. Origins

brian thought (l. 1)
-- a character in W.O. Mitchell's Who Has Seen The Wind.

poles connecting (l. 5)
The swarming hum of telephone wires came to him, barely perceptible in the stillness, hardly a sound heard so much as a pulsing of power felt. He looked up at rime-white wires, following them from pole to pole to the prairie's rim. From each person stretched back a long line -- hundreds and hundreds of years -- each person stuck up. (Mitchell, 299)

38.

clarke's belt (l. 11)
-- the "C" band communication satellites named for Arthur C. Clarke.

a dam (l. 12)
-- Adam.

...north saskatchewan... (l. 31)
-- the river, not the province.

...slough shark (l. 31)
-- slang for Northern Pike.

40. Propagation

...relief feeding mother's (l. 78)
(Cf. Papa C. n, l. 192)

ontario's mitchell (l. 85)
Mitchell is a town in Ontario.

page

41.

first/great (l. 95)
-- WWI / The Great War.

42. Reunion

on line (l.99)
-- computer command.

44. Fencing
(see below note: "The Red Fox at Polar Park.")

45. Work in Progress

from no
till ground (ll. 14-5)
No-till farming is a technique presently being employed by some Alberta farmers.

46. Barbed Lines

separating wheat and tears
Homonym: the Biblical "tares" -- an unwanted weed.

47. Kilos of Burgers

...(colourized)... (l. 9)
-- some grocery stores colour the meat on display.

50. The Red Fox At Polar Park
Michael Ondaatje's reverse footage segments in The Collected Works of Billy The Kid have used this same technique. However, my intention is not one of a camera but an imitation of the movement of the trapped fox. In "Fencing" the image reverses on itself but here the sense is one of heightened pathos. The snow fence becomes a "humour" on the body of nature.

page

51. Chaff

chaff remains (l. 7)
Cf. -- the Imagist principle "use no superfluous words." In any editorial task it is difficult to decide which words remain.

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APPENDIX

IS POETRY

Pound haunts me

the aphoristic nature of a phrase

unnecessary or excessive?

Or was he thinking etymology < L. *super*, above + *fluere*, to flow: "Use no superfluous word...."

absolutely nevermore
intentionally use
exacerbated cacophony

Words modulate between simple description and divine afflatus
reformed into something new.

Examine the possibilities -- a clandestine meeting on a back road.

a farmer introduced it
now it's everywhere
read in
Barbed Lines

there are many emotions combating for dominance; pain, lust, suffering, anger, resentment...

This is an attempt to capture.

Develop a taste for concrete deer with embedded antlers
Then! Moulting lasts a thousand years.

The last two lines intermingle

disparate-fuse-image

The last word forms the glue to bind the image. Sometimes

the fifth point on a compass
is the point where

"In music. Crow is realist. But, then,"

word unit

Move beyond the image. Imagine little condolement comes from the few

words

excessive above
or on the flow of a poetic line

below

That words have power, is of course evide nt
However, contact here is ach ieved

Year after year rocksriseup; picked before seed can be sown.

That the reader will associate these words in a like manner.

Some writers aspire to control words, a noble aspiration, but one which ultimately

The Difference Between Us and Them

r is x r is x r is x r is x r is x r is x r is x

yes one might
read "us and them" as
<M> <F>
but this poem

"R is x" is curiously mathematical. This heightens the irony, since neither "r" nor "x" have any irreducible meaning, except that empowered by the reader. Letters -- and subsequently words -- have no absolute meaning. But tone

Consider the realm beyond the page. The

JEOPARDY

rite of passage
married beard
son and father
buried here

Who was Jacob Hutter?

a chicken boss
or hay or straw
a businessman
biblical law

Who was Jacob Hutter?

What will the reader think when confronted with this particular combination?

dear

bp nichol

love
A.B.O.R.

PS (8564 I16 L89 1974)

; an acknowledgement that language is inadequate.

> Any combination of letters at once becomes a structure. Poetry moves beyond. Forms like free verse or haiku. Inasmuch as all these hopefully. That said, I'd like to add that this does not mean that one should.

Consider:

IS
SI

steer:

Some Brerow Philosophy

IS
SI

yes

it begs for seed
The precarious balance of agreement

As we read and reread
PO--- is all/ways altered

it could be argued
inherently
Mitchell forever fashioning paper Brians over and over
again

MS-DOS	TRANSLATION
fc /n test1.src test2.src >test3.src	Scratch my fuckin' balls all three of you
fc \user\working\file.txt \user \backup\file.txt	Fuck you Sir and your job You Serback, Up filet zit!

"In some
haunting way
the Ben
[is] part
of it."

Any discussion will
And here is the key word.

This leads to the unlikely conclusion that perhaps
It is therefore desirable to

The shape of these words in a line on a page.

"IF YOU WANT THE GIST OF THE MATTER..."

in sane voice
change pain to glory
mumbling over wine and bread

in sane others
watch wicked thought
cast down to hell

infect others
with insane order
insane voice
with wild rambling

St. Sufferingholdinglongingmergingmitchellpoundand

letters have tone
Pound knew